

# "THE MOST BEAUTIFUL MAN IN THE WORLD"

By WINNIFRED HARPER COOLEY.

**H**is entered the studio like a dazzling ray of sunshine—clad in a combination of kimono and pajamas.

It was sufficiently startling to behold for the first time "the most beautiful man in the world," but doubly so to be received by him thus unconventionally. We see them on the stage nowadays, the Russian dancers and all the other interpreters of the elemental, and do not blush at the diminutive leopard skin as a costume, but to meet them in their homes clad in scanty silken garments, their bare feet encased in sandals, is a bit overwhelming.

It was, however, only a moment after taking the cold plunge that I emerged in the sunlight of his sweet young personality, for Paul Swan is the incarnation of youth and eternal spring. In the parlance of the world he is 25 years old, but in terms of eternity he is every day a newly created spirit. Beauty has no age or sex, and his is of the pagan god Pan, sparkling and ephemeral.

"About my Greek colony?" he repeated. "Yes, it is about to become a realized ideal. I have actually purchased a beautiful wooded tract of land in the Adirondacks. In Warren county. It is seven miles from a railroad, the nearest station being a picturesque village.

"It is wonderful timber land, and we have a huge barn, which can be divided up into numerous living rooms and studios. Strangely enough there seems to be no spot in America where beauty loving souls and people doing creative, artistic work can meet on a plane of

## In His Adirondack Tract Paul Swan Will Found a Greek Colony Where Beauty Loving Souls May Work Out Artistic Ideals and Do the Household Tasks

"You see," he said simply, "I am at heart nothing but a ploughboy. I came from a farm in Nebraska. I ran away to go to school, trudging over long, hard roads in a wild country when I was only 12 years old in order to obtain a high school education. I really am thoroughly self-made and have earned my way through varying vicissitudes ever since childhood. I have slept in a basement doorway on Broadway because

than effeminate and contemptible. There are so many followers of art and music who lose their poise, degenerate or fly off at outrageous tangents that a practical person with a sense of humor may be excused perhaps for being a bit intolerant of the artistic tribe; but if we have an open mind it certainly is of great interest to meet a spirit of light and joy in this prosaic world.

"Our colony is to be no Liberty Hall—

no place for the idle and foppish, for the vain and sensual," he went on. "To be Greek is not only to cultivate beauty and harmony but to love strength, purity and efficiency. We will have classes in athletics and dancing, not the more violent but those which develop grace and symmetry. The reciprocation of daily labor will bring about a modest, democratic spirit, and our studies in architectural and municipal beauty will

star for five great oil portraits representing her in as many characters, and this commission took the artist—scarcely more than a child—to her Port Chester home for an entire summer.

Many artists would have been only too proud and happy to attain the distinction of painting the actress. The only one who had ever in any way satisfied her previously was a famous Russian. Paul Swan caught the wonderful moods of the most subtle modern actress and received a liberal education from her friendship. Even the close association of hostess and guest never made her seem commonplace or other than a mystic intelligence. She greatly admired the beautiful boy and used laughingly to exclaim:

"You are too old to adopt and too young to marry!"

This money for the five portraits, earned by hard, unremitting labor, made it possible for this little ploughboy of the Western world to realize the dreams of his lifetime, and visit Greece and Egypt.

Egypt and all of Europe he found intellectually interesting, but Greece one long ecstasy. It was when he was studying with the Athenian sculptor Thomas Thermopolis that he became enamored of dancing as a perfect expression of certain ideals. He first danced at a fest promoted by this Greek sculptor. From that time on dancing

was to be the passion of his life. Nazimova disapproved of his going on the stage, believing that he would find it sordid and disillusioning; but he can find no other medium of expression so satisfactory.

the beautiful young father with the tiny morsel of humanity in his arms. And he is remarkably beautiful! Although below medium height and some-

simple domestic and democratic living. There are the conventional Chautauquas, the high brow institutions, the classes and lectures and pedagogical communities, but there are no centres of simplicity where workers who are sincere can mould art conditions and create ideals for the nation.

"I want this to be a sort of clearing house where problems of beautifying American cities can be thrashed out, where unappreciated talent can be so directed and developed as to be brought to the notice of the buyers of the country. Yet we especially discourage the commercial craftsmen who work only for money. We do not want the mountain home to be merely a resting place for the hustling writers and painters who are pausing a moment to be lazy before getting their second wind to race madly onward in quest of fortune and fame."

"A sort of 'And no one shall work for money. And no one shall work for fame. But each on his separate star. Shall paint the things as he sees them. For the god of things as they are?' I suggested.

"Exactly," he said, enthusiastically. "But on the other hand, we do not want the luxury loving. There is a whole horde of people who are gushing, effusive and pseudo artistic. They chase geniuses perennially, hoping to capture them for receptions and teas. The idea of a summer resort filled with talented 'bohemian' persons appeals to them as a novel and thrilling experience.

"The type of worker whom we aim to interest in our colony is the honest laborer in the realm of the ideal who has something to express and is brave enough to express that something, even at pecuniary loss and in the face of ridicule. I honestly believe that we must return to something akin to the simple life, and it is my plan not to have any servants in the community, each contributing several hours daily to the light tasks of cooperative service."

I had a fleeting vision of a somewhat disorganized cooperative household run by the mutual labor of varying artistic temperaments. However, the founder of the colony does not impress one as either a fool or a dawdler, and his simple, practical manner, more than any words or glowing prospectus, soon established in my naturally sceptical intellect a deep faith and hearty indorsement.

I had not the money for a night's lodging."

"Impossible!" I exclaimed, seeing the halo of his recent days in Egypt and Greece above his fair ringlets.

All about me was the luxury of a modern, unusually elegant New York studio. It was of the duplex variety, done in wonderful woods, carpeted with soft Persian rugs, its walls lined with rare paintings, expressions of the moods of the boy chatting unconcernedly before me. And yet no one could doubt that, amid the comforts of present material prosperity, his soul was simple and sincere. It is one thing to use luxury as a background; another thing to wallow in it. "Things" will never suffocate Paul Swan.

It is a far cry from a Nebraska prairie to the sunny isles of Greece where "burning Sappho loved and sang." The story of this reincarnated Narcissus is more fascinating than any fairy tale. One cannot picture him among the rude farmhands and severe storms of the plains of Nebraska. Rather does he seem the embodiment of the spirit of Athens.

Golden Greece was his lodestar from childhood. He cherished an absolute and definite conviction that in a previous incarnation he had been a Greek, and I, a practical New Yorker, in a high studio building just off bustling Broadway, felt the influence of his certain conviction steal upon me.

"When I went to Greece," he said, "I had a different feeling from anything I have ever experienced before or since. I felt a complete realization of my being indigenous to that soil."

"The scenes, the people, the air I breathed were wholly familiar. I had come into my own. After many silent centuries Greece had drawn me back again to her warm bosom. Although I loved Egypt and found many enthusiasms in the spirit of art and beauty in the old world, no other country had this effect upon me."

It is necessary for me to impress upon the sceptical that there is nothing mystical or uncanny or abnormal about the young painter, although it will be impossible to convert the plain, commercial, unpoetical American business man to any toleration of male beauty, or to convince him that one whose entire life is spent in the expression of beauty through dancing and painting is other



In one of his poetic dances.

encourage civic responsibility." Surely not the words or sentiments of a weakling.

The boy who struggled from the farmlands of the West to the Chicago Art Institute finally landed with \$20 in his pocket within the inhospitable gates of Manhattan. The turning point of his life was reached when he first heard Nazimova play then.

"She was the most fascinating person in the world," he said, "and still is the most marvelous personality."

His one burning desire was to paint the Russian genius. Boyishly he wrote her, begging for a photograph in order that he might express his interpretation of the great actress in the form of a portrait. His letter went unanswered. Doubtless Nazimova's waste basket was filled with thousands of similar outpourings of youthful effusions.

Then he bought two photographs of her and went to see her play several different characters. Although very poor, he executed a life size oil painting and presented it to her. He sent the mammoth package by express to her theatre and by mail a modest note of explanation. He was asked to come to the theatre and immediately by the expressions of awe and respect of the doorman he realized that at last he had triumphed. He was led through the dark theatre in back of the stage, where the entire cast was assembled around the unpacked portrait, and was welcomed enthusiastically by every one, including the actress.

That portrait, done by the youth in his teens, now adorns the front foyer of Nazimova's theatre. In Thirty-fifth street, New York city. The immediate result was an order from the Russian

Last summer he gave interpretative dancing in Newport and in New York drawing rooms, and the two vocations, dancing and painting, may be pursued simultaneously.

"I have no illusions left," he told me, "regarding fame, or ambition, or greatness, or perfect happiness. The best that any of us can do is to express ourselves and our ideals through the medium which is most natural to us."

"I used to say that painting was the 'perpiration of the soul,' but that expression was a little offensive, as is the naturalness of Walt Whitman, and so, perhaps, we can best word it, that our paintings are the 'exhalations of the soul.' I just paint to get it out of my system, and I dance to express those subtle emotions and hidden meanings which help us to feel that life is somehow good and beautiful, and pass the news along."

I had noticed that many of his paintings were of young boys rather than of women. He feels that masculine symmetry and beauty has been neglected in the American workaday world. The past has accentuated brute strength and mastery and the characteristics of the caveman as ideals of male perfection, and until the desirability of these qualities he abolished the world at large will frown upon any cultivation of loveliness in manhood.

"Of course I have been maligned and abused and persecuted," Mr. Swan said cheerfully, "but the only thing I really want to impress upon people is that I am not abnormal or eccentric. Why should one be regarded as a freak because he admires the beautiful?"

I think it was about this time in our discourse that it occurred to him to show me his baby.

"Honestly," he said ingenuously, "it is the most wonderful child! I assure you that it is quite different from the ordinary five weeks old infant. I do not say this through vanity or because I am its father, but truly it is much more than a bundle of blankets! It is a perfect little personality—an entity. You just see—"

Soon he came back to me, bringing the lovely little baby girl, and although not an expert judge I admitted that it looked good to me. I wish that I could have taken a snapshot photograph of

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come confused when they approach the red lights, supposing them to indicate danger?"

"You are assuming entirely too much," replied the city man, "as an Interborough official's immediate duty is to prevent it. When it was decided to mark the location of the fire alarm boxes with lights the fact became apparent that danger signals of red lights were scattered so profusely over the great underground system that it would be folly to attempt to use them for any other purpose."

"What did the Interborough do to do to solve the problem? Well, they simply broke all precedents by using blue lights to mark the fire alarm boxes. The platform man told me the other day that the blue lights had been installed recently to mark the fire alarm boxes. I assume that he intended the statement to apply to the whole system. Perhaps he only intended it to apply to that particular station. At any rate I noticed the blue lights the other morning for the first time. They were the first lights of the system I have noticed in the subway system. I use the system extensively, and it leads me to believe the blue lights are of recent vintage."

"It may take some time to educate the public to the fact that the new blue lights are used to mark the locations of fire boxes. The fact that fire is second nature for the city man and child to search for and light capped humpster. It is so difficult to bear in mind that the blue light is the symbol in the subway system of the symbol in the street of the symbol in the subway system."

However, in view of the fact that red, yellow, green and white lights are used extensively in the underground system, few persons could be expected to choose from the multitude admitted that the additional color added to the chromatic effect."

Caskets in Elevators. In a Harlem flat the other day the tenants received a sudden summons to the funeral of one of the residents. After the service in the church the casket was taken to the flat. The casket was placed in the elevator and the attendant was asked to take it down stairs. Instead of taking it down stairs, the attendant took it up to the flat. The attendant was asked to take it down stairs. Instead of taking it down stairs, the attendant took it up to the flat. The attendant was asked to take it down stairs. Instead of taking it down stairs, the attendant took it up to the flat.

In order to get the casket down the elevator it had to be taken up to the third floor and taken down stairs. The attendant was asked to take it down stairs. Instead of taking it down stairs, the attendant took it up to the flat. The attendant was asked to take it down stairs. Instead of taking it down stairs, the attendant took it up to the flat.

"We take caskets down stairs," the attendant said, "but we do not take them up stairs. If you want to take a casket up stairs, you must take it up stairs. If you want to take a casket down stairs, you must take it down stairs. If you want to take a casket up stairs, you must take it up stairs. If you want to take a casket down stairs, you must take it down stairs."

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"The most beautiful man in America."